

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 036536

14

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TO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE

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TAGS: SENV, CA

SUBJECT:BEAUFORT SEA OIL SPILLS

REFS; OTTAWA 387, 564

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 STATE 036536

1. EMBASSY IS REQUESTED TO DELIVER THE FOLLOWING NOTE TO

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE
DATE:

BEGIN TEXT: "THE EMBASSY OF THE US PRESENTS ITS COMPLIMENTS
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND HAS THE HONOR TO
REFER TO THE DEPARTMENT'S NOTE OF JANUARY 29 CONCERNING PRO-
POSED EXPLORATORY DRILLING FOR OIL IN THE OPEN WATERS OF THE
BEAUFORT SEA. THE USG APPRECIATES BEING NOTIFIED OF THIS
PROPOSED ACTION, AND ACCEPTS WITH SATISFACTION THE CANADIAN
PROPOSAL FOR AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE GENERAL QUESTION OF
THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF OFFSHORE DRILLING FOR OIL
AND GAS IN ARCTIC WATERS.

"ON THE BASIS OF A PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE CANADIAN
SUMMARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT ON OFFSHORE DRILLING FOR
OIL IN THE BEAUFORT SEA, THE USG WISHES TO EXPRESS CONCERN
ABOUT EXPLORATORY DRILLING AT THIS TIME IN VIEW OF THE CON-
CLUSIONS OF THAT REPORT. THE CONCLUSION THAT EXISTING

TECHNOLOGY IS UNABLE TO COPE WITH AN OIL WELL BLOWOUT IN
THE OPEN WATERS OF THE BEAUFORT SEA, AND THAT IF SUCH A
BLOWOUT OCCURRED, ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE COULD OCCUR ALONG
THE COAST OF THE US AS FAR WEST AS POINT BARROW, ALASKA
IS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO THE USG. AS NO AGREEMENT
EXISTS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WITH RESPECT TO OIL
SPILLS AND CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR SUCH SPILLS IN THE ARCTIC,
THE USG BELIEVES THAT THE PROPOSED EXCHANGE OF VIEWS
BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS SHOULD ALSO
INCLUDE DISCUSSION OF THE UTILITY OF OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY
ARRANGEMENTS FOR ARCTIC WATERS.

"THE GOVERNMENT OF THE US LIKEWISE VIEWS WITH CONCERN THE
POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF AN OIL WELL BLOWOUT IN THE BEAUFORT
SEA ON MIGRATORY BIRDS, LAND AND MARINE MAMMALS, AND THE
ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE REPORT'S
CONCLUSION THAT RECOVERY FROM MANY OF THE EFFECTS OF AN
OIL WELL BLOWOUT COULD TAKE AS LONG AS A DECADE. THE USG
NOTES THAT NUMEROUS BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS
EXIST WITH RESPECT TO THE CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF
THESE SPECIES, AND THAT THE EFFECT OF AN OIL BLOWOUT IN
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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 036536

THE OPEN WATERS OF THE BEAUFORT SEA COULD HAVE A SIGNIFI-
CANT EFFECT ON INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO CONSERVE AND
PROTECT THESE SPECIES.

"IN VIEW OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE US
REQUESTS THAT THE GOC NOT CONSIDER GRANTING AUTHORIZATION
FOR OFFSHORE DRILLING IN THE OPEN WATERS OF THE BEAUFORT
SEA UNTIL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO

GOVERNMENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND UNTIL THE USG HAS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE FULL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DRILLING. THE USG IS PREPARED TO ENTER INTO A SIMILAR UNDERTAKING WITH RESPECT TO DRILLING AUTHORIZATION IN THE OPEN WATERS OF THE BEAUFORT SEA OPPOSITE US TERRITORY. IN VIEW OF THE STATEMENTS OF CANADIAN OFFICIALS WHICH INDICATE A DESIRE FOR EARLY ACTION ON THE PROPOSED DRILLING, THE USG IS AMENABLE TO CONSULTATIONS AT THE EARLIEST PRACTICABLE DATE.

"THE EMBASSY OF THE US TAKES THIS OPPORTUNITY TO AGAIN CONVEY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS THE ASSURANCES OF ITS HIGHEST CONSIDERATION." END TEXT.

2. EMBASSY MAY WISH TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS ORALLY:

--THE USG REALIZES THAT THE TIME FRAME FOR DEALING WITH THIS MATTER IS SHORT, IN VIEW OF SCHEDULED GOC REVIEW OF DRILLING APPLICATIONS. WE REGRET THAT WE DID NOT HAVE EARLIER NOTIFICATION OF CANADIAN PLANS IN ORDER TO PERMIT

A CLOSER AND MORE DELIBERATE COORDINATION AND DISCUSSION OF THIS MATTER.

--WE ARE PREPARED TO MEET BILATERALLY AS SOON AS FEASIBLE BUT BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HAVE REVIEWED THE FULL CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT BEFORE DISCUSSIONS. WE COULD PROBABLY SCHEDULE TALKS ABOUT THE MONTH AFTER RECEIVING THE FULL REPORT.

--IN VIEW OF THE APPARENT INADEQUACY OF PRESENT TECHNOLOGY TO ENSURE THAT DRILLING CAN PROCEED WITHOUT RISK OF APPRECIABLE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE, WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 036536

HAVING GOC VIEWS ON HOW THE PROPOSED DRILLING PROGRAM RELATES TO ITS LONG-STANDING CONCERN FOR SPECIAL PROTECTION OF THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT. WE ALSO WONDER WHETHER THE CANADIAN ATTITUDE WITH REGARD TO BEAUFORT SEA DRILLING PRESAGES A SIMILAR POSITION WITH REGARD TO PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT IN OTHER AREAS.

--WE BELIEVE IT WILL BE USEFUL TO INCLUDE IN OUR DISCUSSIONS THE STATUS OF EXISTING TECHNOLOGY WITH RESPECT TO THE EXPLOITATION OF AN OIL OR GAS FIELD IN THE OPEN WATERS OF THE BEAUFORT SEA.

--THE US ALSO HAS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS DEPOSITS IN THE ARCTIC. IN VIEW OF THIS MUTUAL INTEREST, WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPLORE WITH THE

GOC THE ADVISABILITY OF ESTABLISHING CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS
TO HELP ENSURE THE RATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THERESOURCES OF
THE AREA. KISSINGER

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